

Gunleather

by Will Ghormley

Howdy, I'm Will Ghormley, maker of Old West Gunleather. I've been working leather over twenty years. I couldn't afford a holster for my first Colt Peacemaker, so I made one. It was a Hollywood Buscadero Gunslinger's rig. One fall, working as a young ranch hand in southwest Colorado, I decided I needed cash more than that rig. H. T. Hoover gave me ninety bucks for it.

H. T. wasn't his real name. Jim is what everyone else called him and he was the foreman of the Pine River Ranch. Jim had been a paratrooper in Vietnam. He referred to us cowboys as his "troops". Since he was the boss Johnny started calling him Head Troop or H. T. for short. Ol' H. T. is probably one of the reasons I joined the Army and became a paratrooper.

When H. T. got home from Vietnam

he took a job in one of the area's silver mines. One day his left hand got smashed between two ore cars. It healed up as flat and stiff as an old scrap of rawhide. His four fingers were permanently curved at the ends like a claw. His thumb only half worked. Often he hooked it in his pants pocket and hung his hand there like a bail hook until he needed it.

You would never know his hand was crippled to watch him work though. He would hang his rope on those twisted fingers and throw his loop with his right hand. The lariat would spool off those fingers like fly fishing line off a reel. His hand seemed custom made for fanning a gun too. I guess that's one of the reasons I didn't mind letting go of that first holster I made. I knew it would be used and appreciated.

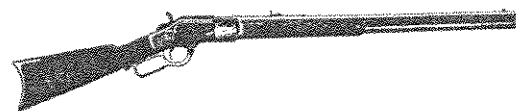
Well, a lot of years have gone by since those carefree days as a young cowboy, but I still get that same feeling every time someone tells me how much they enjoy the holster I made them. I can't even begin to explain how pleased I was when George asked me if I would write a column for *The Shootist* on gunleather and cowboy accessories. Never mind that there are others more qualified to write on this subject, I'll do the best I can. If you have a correction, suggestion or topic you would like me to cover, just let me know. I don't know all there is to know about gunleather and I'm always eager to learn more.

By way of introducing this column I find it necessary we all be on the same sheet of music. I'll be using technical terms to describe the different features of

The BULLET HOLE GUNSMITH

Vaughn Trueman
(319) 233-0204
1-800-440-0204

BARREL RE-LINING



CUSTOM ACTION WORK



SPECIALIZING IN WESTERN ACTION GUNS

703 Second Avenue
Evansdale, IA 50707

The Shootist

holsters. This isn't the most riveting material you will receive, but it will be a handy reference when I mention something you're uncertain of. You may have different names for some of the things I'll be mentioning, but at least you'll know what I mean.

I'm looking forward to all the conversations we'll be having. See you on the range.

Elements of a Holster

The following numbered terms and definitions correspond to the numbered illustrations on the next page. Additional illustrations of the "cant" of a holster follow that.

1. **Belt Loop:** the fold of leather that the belt passes through, holding the holster to the belt.
2. **Pouch:** the part of the holster that holds the weapon.
3. **Main Stem:** the seam where the folds of leather are sewn, making the pouch.
4. **Toe:** The barrel end of the pouch. There are three types of toes.
 - 4a. **Sewn Round Toe:** the main stem is sewn around the end of the barrel, closing off the end of the pouch.
 - 4b. **Sewn Tow Plug:** the end of the pouch is closed off with a separate cut of leather sewn into the barrel end of the pouch.
 - 4c. **Open Toe:** the main stem stops short and does not close off the end of the pouch.
5. **Throat:** the open top of the pouch where the weapon is inserted.
6. **Recurve:** the way the throat
 - 6a. **Deep Recurve:** the edge of the throat plunges to reveal more of the trigger and/or hammer.
 - 6b. **Shallow Recurve:** the edge of the throat is less curved to reveal less of the trigger and/or hammer.
 - 6c. **Single Recurve:** the edge of the throat dips to reveal more of the trigger.
 - 6d. **Double Recurve:** the edge of the throat dips to reveal more of the trigger and the hammer.
 - 6e. **Triple Recurve (only possible with California-style holsters):** the edge of the throat dips at both front and back of the pouch revealing most of the trigger on both sides of the holster, as well as dipping to reveal more of the hammer.
 7. **Skirt:** the flap of leather on a Mexican Loop holster that folds over the belt to form the belt loop and the backing behind the pouch.
 - 7a. **Half Skirt**
 - 7b. **3/4 Skirt**
 - 7c. **Full Skirt**
 - 7d. **Long Skirt**
 - 7e. **Narrow Skirt**
 - 7f. **Wide Skirt**
 - 7g. **Oval Skirt**
 - 7h. **Straight Skirt**
 8. **Loop:** created by slots in the skirt or by riveting a separate cut of leather to the skirt. The pouch is passed through either the slots or the rivetted-on loop to secure it to the skirt, thus forming the Mexican Loop-style holster.
 - 8a. **Slotted Loop**
 - 8b. **Riveted Loop**
 9. **Flap:** portion of the holster folding over with a closure on the front to protect and secure the weapon.
 - 9a. **Full Flap**
 - 9b. **Half Flap**



E.A. MEANEA SADDLE CO.

The Finest Old Time Cowboy
Gear On The Market Today.

Reenactors

History Buffs

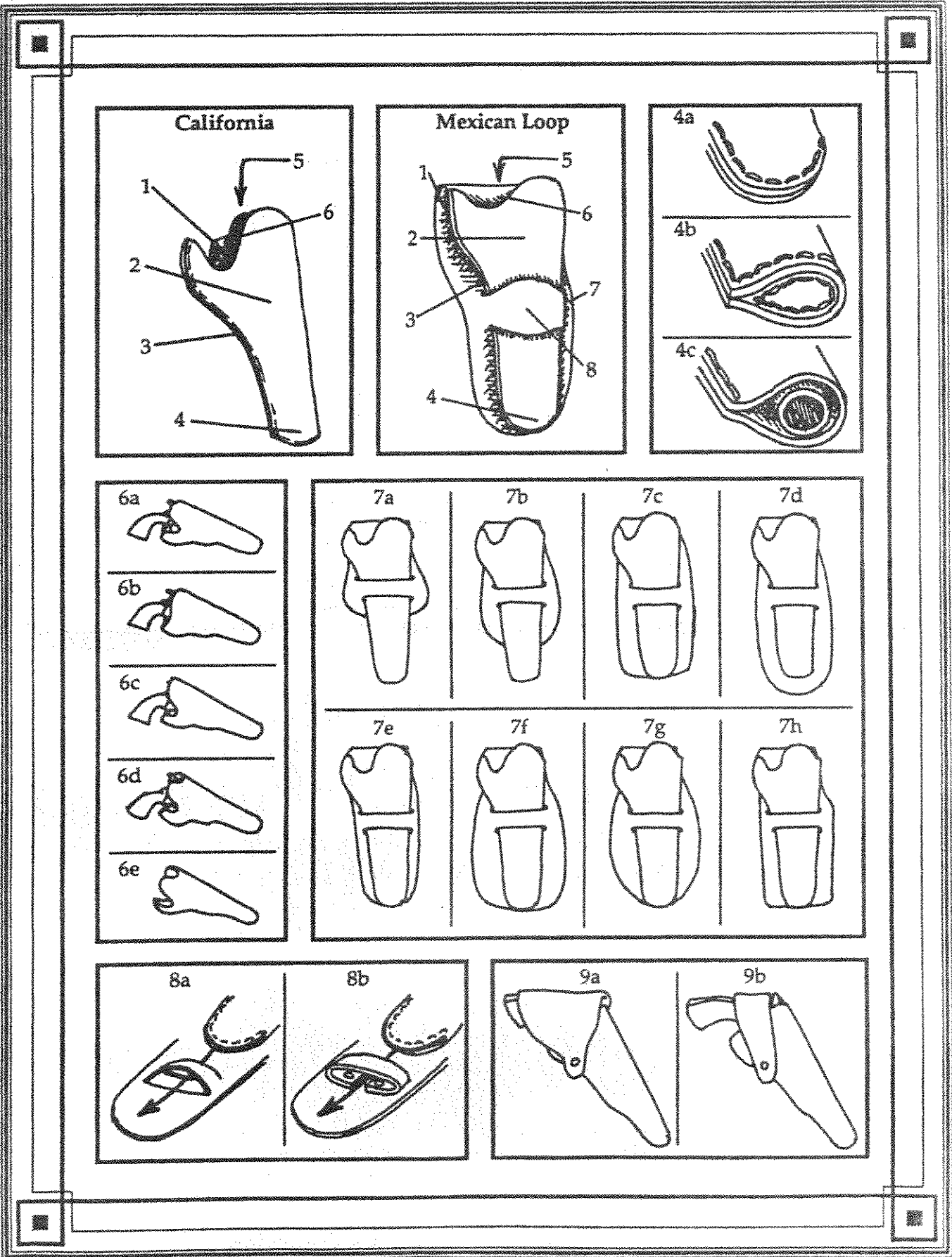
Collectors

Own a piece of history in the making.

Midwest Representative
M 4440 B
Catalog \$10.00
includes 1912 reprint

Michael Bohannon
P.O. Box 702
Worth, IL 60482
708-923-1548

Visit us at the NCOWS Convention.



The Cant of a Holster

The Cant of a holster is the angle that the holster holds the weapon in its relation to the belt. There are four basic angle to a holster.

1. 90 degree: straight up and down.
2. Butt forward: angling the butt of the weapon forward with the toe of the pouch angling towards the rear.
3. Toe forward: angling the toe of the pouch forward with the butt of the weapon angling towards the rear. This holster works well carried strong side or cross draw.
4. Cross draw: a sharp angle to the pouch so it can be worn opposite of the strong side and be drawn by reaching across the belly. This holster works well for mounted use and was the earliest form of the belt mounted holsters.

